

Fuels and Fire Behavior Advisory

Southeast Oregon

8/3/2013



Subject : This advisory is the second issued for Southeast Oregon and has been updated to reflect ongoing conditions. Persistent drying has occurred across southeast Oregon leading to severe drought conditions. Many stations are indicating significantly lower than average live fuel moisture values.

Discussion: Continued dry weather has impacted live fuels, most notably Wyoming Big Sagebrush. Five of six stations are indicating live fuel moisture significantly lower than average and one station setting a new record low. **Resistance to control has been elevated under weather conditions typically not conducive to presenting control problems.**

Difference from normal conditions: The burn environment and conditions from 2012 have carried over into 2013. **Live fuels moisture samples from 5 of 6 stations are showing significant departure from average with one station setting record low.** Many areas in southeast Oregon, notably far southeast corner are 25-50% average precipitation (less than one inch received in previous 12 month period). Not only are live fuels under drought stress but impacts to heavy fuels are occurring, 100 hr fuel moisture values exceed 97th percentile and 1000 hr fuel moistures are averaging 9% and projected to continue to decline in the coming weeks.

Concerns to Firefighters and the Public:

Expect a greater degree of resistance to control, direct attack on the flanks may not be a viable option. Aviation and mechanized assets may be needed to support flanking attack.

Expect longer burn periods with elevated fire intensity extending into the evening hours.

Rate of Spread will be accelerated on steep slopes with modest winds resulting in shorter time of escape to safety. Rapid fire spread with elongated flaming fronts is to be expected with any wind increase or downdraft from passing thunderstorm. Spot fires could gain intensity and spread rapidly.

Pay close attention to changing conditions to include; fuel transition, slope change or reversal, aspect change and shifting winds.

Mitigation Measures:

Indirect strategies will need to be identified and communicated early. Be cautious when going indirect, ensure support is on site and readily available, reassess if resources are not available. Be mindful of unburned fuel between resources and fire.

Identify a solid anchor point and utilize flanking or pincer tactics. Do not over extend resource coverage "hold what can be held". Watch for wind shifts and prolific spotting. Consider incorporating spots into main fire.

Continually evaluate escape routes and safety zones. When feasible use clean "black" as safety zone. Early recognition of escape to safety is imperative. Post lookouts that can assist with early warning. Use aviation assets IF/WHEN available to assist with gathering situational assessment.

Maintaining Situational Awareness is essential - **Understand the implications of change**

- light flashy fuels will accelerate and burn quickly, larger and live fuels can slow spread but increase intensity
- wind shifts, what was a flank could rapidly change and become the head
- slope and aspect, backing fire could become head fire
- continue to evaluate effectiveness of escape routes and safety zones

Area of Concern: Southeast Oregon PSA NW12 and BLM lands protected by Vale BLM in NW11.